

LAYOUT FOR LIVING

Dictum of Democratic Devolution . . .

D. D. D., it came to be called in our last annual meeting: the idea that the choices as to what should be put where in a town or region could in the long run be made better by people on the spot—by those who are daily confronted with the fruits of their wisdom or unwisdom—rather than by somebody afar off. This seems a good time to ask how fully the D.D.D. can be applied in Canadian community planning.

Leave aside the ancient choices—whether the original site was selected by absent magnates, military leaders or Ministers. Whose decisions are today re-shaping the place? How much of the essential bone and sinew of our city can still be extended or replaced without any reference to municipal decisions? Well, to begin with, no provincial or federal government agency can be bound by municipal council resolution. In 1950, almost one-quarter of our urban buildings can escape out of reach of local planning by that fact alone; and the proportion is constantly rising.

Let's list the anatomical parts of our community that could be removed, enlarged or displaced by Provincial or Federal surgeons without consulting local wishes in the matter: railways, waterways, harbour works, high tension electric lines, airports and flightways, trunk highway connections, customs house, post offices, liquor stores, employment exchange, many clerical offices—a good share of all our important arteries and points of local assembly, each surrounded by commercial properties whose value depends on being close to the crowd.

Then, too, remote authorities are often financial partners in other essential local facilities: new schools, housing, hospitals, health clinics, libraries, some street improvements, playgrounds, and so forth. Under the new housing laws in most provinces the local needs may be judged, designs executed, and projects operated by public agencies in no sense answerable to the local government. Governmental officials have to authorize the lion's share of expenditures for these facilities. This in effect may mean that the location, orientation, building design, structural and landscape materials for a prominent local feature can all be specified from afar.

Apparently the parliamentary parents believe their municipal offspring too prone to over-spend. Either the junior governments have to be given larger allowances of spending-money (with all the supervision that

a system of grants-in-aid implies), or else the juniors have to be put into a position where they could more nearly meet their needs by their own earnings. In the past few years the Provinces and the national government of Canada *in theory* seem to have favoured greater generosity in handing down funds, rather than greater municipal power to raise local levies. How about municipal buying power *in practice*?

The past decade has seen an increase of about 20% in the nation's population, of nearer 30% in non-farm population. It has witnessed enormous growth of urban working forces, output, corporate profits and payrolls. Yet in terms of dollars of 1939 value, our municipal governments have in that time increased their annual revenues by only about 25%; cities and towns have *less to spend* per constituent than they had before the war. Again, reduced to 1939 dollars, the grants-in-aid to municipalities from senior governments have increased only about 20% during the decade; our cities and towns are getting *less help* per constituent from above than they did before the war. Meanwhile our Provinces—taken as a whole—are collecting rather *more* per constituent, even allowing for money inflation, than they did before the war.

We still think that planning decisions are more likely to be wisely made on the ground where they are to take effect, where mistakes may be seen and corrected in time, and (not least) where the different people making different decisions stand a chance of backing into each other often enough to reach a common understanding of the local situation. So long as Canadian local governments are getting the short end of the public revenue stick, this Dictum of Democratic Devolution in planning won't get very far. With our cities so rapidly developing, planning questions should be coming to the centre of the municipal stage; but that can't happen if more and more of the decisive lines are to be spoken from aloft, in provincial and federal capitals. A re-allocation of Canadian tax sources seems essential to full local exercise of planning powers.

We therefore recommend, to all concerned with community planning, that close attention be paid to the annual meeting of Canada's Mayors in Saskatoon this August, and to the Financial Conference between Provincial and Federal officials to be held in Ottawa this fall. Opportunities for devolving planning responsibility toward local governments may be made or destroyed around this year's fiscal conference tables. —A. H. A.

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LAYOUT FOR LIVING

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HAVE CITIES THE MEANS TO PLAN?

An Editorial

ESSAY IN MIXED DEVELOPMENT

by Frederick Gibberd

TRAINING IN PLANNING

by Carl Feiss

ZONING THE WILDERNESS

by Ray E. Bassett

Readers are reminded that we do not publish in July and August. Watch for new features beginning in September, from 56 Lyon Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Somerford Grove, London: Away with the bad habit in housing of singling out one structure-type to be repeated far and wide! See how each dwelling group gains by mingling within it several genuinely different kinds of accommodation. (Pages 3 - 5). This is now possible in Canada, through judicious use of National and Provincial Housing Acts.

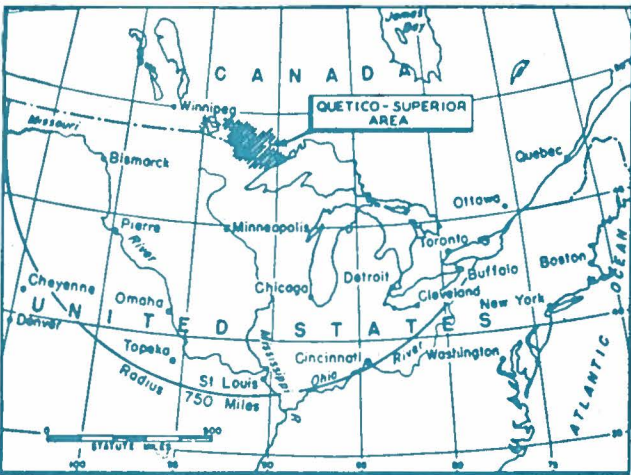
Asserting the Public Interest in the Wilderness

by Ray E. Bassett, Recreation Assistant, U.S. Forest Service*

Since 1916, when the City of New York was granted enabling powers by the State Legislature, approximately 1,200 zoning ordinances have been put into effect in the United States, representing approximately 75 percent of the urban population of the country. Zoning, however, has not been limited to urban situations alone, but has been extended to our agricultural and forested lands as well, and even to our extensive wilderness areas.

Within the boundaries of our western national forests and parks lie the last true strongholds of nature in our land. On the national forests alone are 77 wild and wilderness areas, so designated and set aside by the U.S. Forest Service. They comprise a total of 14,000,000 acres.

The most eastern of these areas and the one involving, perhaps, the greatest number of zoning problems, is the Superior Roadless Area, which is part of the larger Quetico-Superior Area located in the Rainy River and Pigeon River watersheds in the State of Minnesota and the Province of Ontario. Astride the international boundary and extending westward for nearly 200 miles from Lake Superior and for a variable width up to 100 miles is this Quetico-Superior country—a land of forests and waters unique on this continent and perhaps in the world. It is approximately 16,000 square miles in size, and at least forty percent of the surface is covered by lake waters and connecting streams.



The program of management provides, as a means of coordinating activities in Canada and the United States but without changing jurisdictions on either side, that there should be a complete understanding between the two countries as to objectives and the

*International conservation as seen by our partners in it; reprinted from *Planning and Civic Comment* (Washington), March 1950.

means of meeting them. These objectives include: (1) preservation of the recreational values of the lakes and streams and their wooded shores; (2) retention and preservation on a substantial portion of the area of the opportunities for primitive travel under wilderness conditions; (3) elsewhere to administer the forests under good forestry practices; (4) to protect and manage other natural resources, such as game, fish and furbearers; and (5) to set up a board or committee to coordinate practices under the principles agreed upon in the formal understanding.

The United States portion of the Quetico-Superior Area contains most of the Superior National Forest, parts of the several Minnesota State Forests, the Grant Portage Indian Reservation and intermingled private lands. On publicly-owned lands within those areas the objectives of the program are being observed in current management.

From the beginning of the Superior National Forest in 1909, general interest in the wilderness aspects of this northern lake country was manifested. In 1925, the Quetico-Superior Council was formed to fight a proposal to develop water storage for power purposes on many of the lakes. Out of this controversy emerged a concrete program for the preservation of wilderness values, the main points of which were opposition to further commercial developments in the unsettled portions of the Rainy River and Pigeon River watersheds, exclusion of additional dams or other structures that would disturb water levels, and reservation from cutting of all timber immediately bordering lake and stream shores. Legislation to enforce this program was enacted by the 1930 Congress in the Shipstead-Nolan Law. In 1933 the State of Minnesota enacted a similar law applicable to State-owned lands.

Thus, south of the border the publicly-owned lands are in effect zoned into three general classes. First is the one-third of a million acres zoned against additional development, including the cutting of timber. Second is the other two-thirds of the million-acre roadless areas where timber cutting back from the shorelines is permitted, but where structures and roads are restricted to those temporarily needed for the cutting and removal of timber. Third is the remaining area of public lands where, as a general rule, developments are permitted for more intensive uses, including roads, resorts, and recreation cabins. In all zones, however, lake levels are preserved and protected by statute, shoreline timber is preserved and timber cutting on public lands, where permitted, is in accordance with strict regulations. All areas are protected from fire, and the fish and wildlife resources are protected and managed under the provisions of State statutes. —concl. on p. 7

SOMERFORD GROVE ESTATE



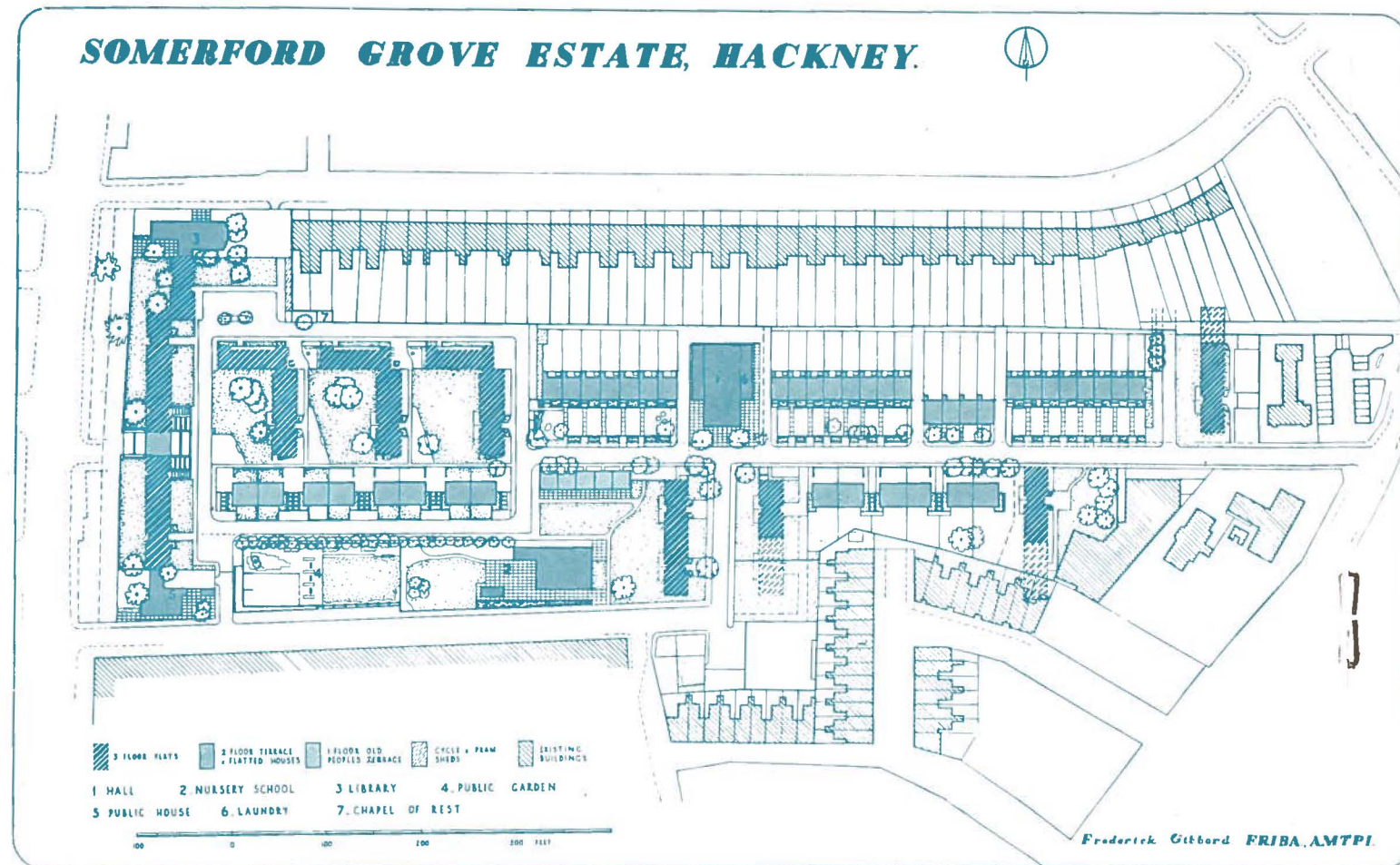
Left to right: Buildings of Types 1, 5 and 3 as seen from west side of a Close (see below and following pages)

The *Architectural Review* terms this scheme "an essay in mixed development" having both urban scale and visual variety. The area is small (9 acres) and the density is of necessity high (about 100 persons per acre in the part now built). There are similarities in the layout to that for *Fresh Meadows* illustrated last month; a series of interconnected quadrangles, in which the pedestrian can have priority. But here there is a more intimate scale, and greater variety of forms and materials, both in buildings and in the surfaces that lie between them. A number of existing buildings were allowed to remain on the site; valuable existing trees and other features were preserved in the redevelopment.

There are five types of building:

- (1) Three-storey blocks of 2 or 3-bedroom apartments;
- (2) Three-storey studio apartments with balcony access;
- (3) Two-storey buildings containing 4 units with 2 bedrooms each;
- (4) Two-storey row houses, each unit having 5 rooms and garden;
- (5) Rows of one-storey units for older residents, each with paved terrace.

At the centre is a building containing meeting hall and laundry. Nearby is to be built a nursery school. On the main access road will be built a library and a pub. In addition to the "closes" between buildings there is a public garden toward one corner of the site.



A New Standard in Residential Planning

The Somerford Grove Estate, Shacklewell Road, Hackney, London; designed by Frederick Gibberd, F.R.I.B.A., A.M.T.P.I., in association with G. L. Downing, O.B.E., A.M.Inst.C.E., Borough Engineer and Surveyor.

"Perhaps the most promising of this group (blocks of flats) is Mr. Gibberd's half-finished Somerford Grove Estate in Hackney, which in its grouping of one-, two- and three-storey dwellings round an exceptionally generous provision of community buildings, the whole domestic in scale and character, could serve as a model to so many housing authorities. . . . Even where the site has nothing to say to the architect and a formal rectilinear layout seems inevitable it should, nevertheless, be avoided. This . . . can, perhaps be justified by the fact that the individual dwelling is so tiny an element in the total effect that humanity and domesticity can only be preserved by a deliberate muffling of the dominant rhythms."

—"Post War Flats in Britain" by Hon. Lionel Brett in *Architectural Review* vol. 106, No. 635 Nov. '49.

"Mr. Gibberd's very interesting scheme at Hackney . . . has set a new standard in the planning of flats, maisonnettes and houses round a series of squares so as to preserve a human scale. No other post-war scheme of high density has achieved the same charm of character. Some of the detail verges on the whimsical, but the whole has a sensitive, imaginative quality that shows it the work of an artist."

—J. M. Richards in *The Architects' Journal*, Jan. 19.

Frederick Gibberd is a familiar contributor to these pages; his plan for the extension of the Borough of Nuneaton appeared in our second issue; some of his views on residential neighbourhood design appeared in *Layout for Living* Nos. 15 and 27; his Preliminary Outline Plan for Harlow New Town (where a mixed residential area is now under construction to his design) was reproduced in No. 22. He is at present working on a shopping centre to be built in the reconstructed Neighbourhood 9 in London's Poplar district; this neighbourhood will constitute a full-scale demonstration of British planning techniques in action at the Festival of 1951 (see *Layout for Living* No. 31). We are indebted to Mr. Gibberd for making the accompanying plan and photographs available; the latter are by Wainwright.

Above, left: Three-storey flats facing upon a Close, with what might here be called double-duplex units on the transverse road beyond. Right: The north front of the one-storey row units for older residents (to the south they have a paved terrace); above them are seen the three-storey flats that look out upon the same Close and terrace. Note the care with which trees have not only been preserved, but integrated into the dwelling group by skilful use of low linking elements.

Training in Planning

by Carl Feiss, Chief,

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Modern city planning education in the technical and professional schools seems to have started in the schools or departments of landscape architecture. I am under the impression that the late Henry V. Hubbard at Harvard was about as responsible as anybody for arousing interest in the subject in these schools. The landscape school at Illinois was also in the field at an early date. When I say early date, the time is purely relative because not much of significance in planning training occurred until the early 1920's. Nearly all important early modern American city planners came out of landscape training. Besides Hubbard, there is a distinguished list of names, including John Nolen, Sr., Henry Wright of Radburn, Arthur Comey, Russell Black, Harland Bartholomew, and by adoption from Great Britain, Thomas Adams of the New York Regional Plan. Most architects are unfamiliar with either the names or accomplishments of these men who made the first studies in the harmonizing of environment with land use and movements of people.

But the standard training for landscape architects was not the most satisfactory incubator for planners. A predominant part of the programs was, of necessity, devoted to botany, horticulture, and the complicated science and esthetics of planting plans. Also the design traditions of Italian, French, and English gardens did not lend themselves too well to translation into city-wide planning. (I know whereof I speak, since my career began, believe it or not, as an undergraduate landscape student under the beloved Robert Wheelwright and Frank Schrepfer at the University of Pennsylvania in 1925.) However, no sound landscape school could avoid the history of city planning any more than it could fail to mention the relationships between the plan of the gardens of Versailles and the plan of Washington. The relationships between the landscape schools and the schools of architecture themselves were, however, quite vague and often non-existent and so what planning advances were made in landscape education failed largely to influence architectural education.

The landscape architect came into city planning through park and recreation work. Parks were extended or attenuated into parkways as the automobile grew in importance, and parkways grew into subdivisions, and subdivisions grew into little plans for suburban communities, and these in turn grew into plans for whole towns.

Both the architect and the landscape architect in the early years of the schools remained indifferent to the social consequences of architecture. The reforms engendered by the establishment of building codes, tenement



ment house laws, and zoning—though to have drastic effect on the practitioner—remained unimportant in the schools and therefore of little responsibility later to the architect, even though he was subject to their specifications. Responsibilities, therefore, were assumed by administrative officials and attorneys like the great zoning lawyer, Alfred Bettman of Cincinnati, who did so much to influence architecture without the architects ever hearing of him. Even occasional competitions for tenement house plans and apartment housing failed to rouse a continuing interest in the schools or in the practice. The large-scale housing experiments in Europe were also late in exciting our interest. It was not until Catherine Bauer's now famous book *Modern Housing* came out in 1934 that a summary of European architectural activity in city planning and housing struck the schools with any kind of force.

Of the landscape architects in planning, the man to have the most lasting effect on design reform of American cities was Henry Wright, of Radburn fame. He worked closely with those architects who are known as the vanguard of modern American planning and housing—Clarence Stein, Frederick Ackerman, Henry Churchill, Albert Mayer, Frederick Bigger, and others. In fact this now-famous coterie of architects, along with the social philosophers (if they can so be called), Herbert Emmerich, Lewis Mumford, Charles Ascher, and Benton Mackaye, formed a nucleus for broad-gauge thinking in the 1920's that has hardly been equalled since. This group was strongly influenced by the philosophies of the great Scottish town planner, sociologist, and botanist, Patrick Geddes, almost unknown to architects but pretty much the founder of the concepts of regionalism. Another important influence on the group and on American housing and planning was that of Sir Raymond Unwin, co-designer with Barry Parker of the first British Garden City, Letchworth, and architect of the equally well known Hampstead Garden Suburb.

I would like to be corrected but, to the best of my knowledge, no school of architecture in the United States was either interested in or being of material help to these men from 1920 through 1933, during the period of experiment and invention. I can recommend highly Clarence Stein's brilliant summary of the work of these years in the last two issues of the *British Town Planning Review*, and I understand that they may be reprinted soon in book form by the Harvard University Press. This work belongs in every architect's library—to be read.

I shall not go further into the history of the growth of planning and housing here; but it was necessary to give a little background to the thesis on which I am about to embark. The schools, during the depression years, prior to World War II, found out about large-scale housing and site planning from the many high-grade European periodicals, books, and visiting architects. Housing and planning in Scandinavia, Holland, and Germany opened new vistas of design and new elements of construction to consider. Students and faculty, traveling abroad, directed their interests more and more to modern architecture and planning and less to the cathedrals. The schools, perforce, changed their pace and interest though not with much inherent good will. It was a slow process. Eliel Saarinen, in opening a school for planners at Cranbrook (Michigan) in 1932, added much weight to the value of planning. By 1933, when the first significant steps in Federal housing architecture were to begin, there was still little school interest reflected in the design programs. The faculties were slower to respond than the students or even, in this case, than the practising architects.

The most important planning schools, largely at the graduate level, beginning with Harvard, M.I.T., Columbia, Illinois, Iowa, and followed in varying degrees by others, have all developed planning as either an adjunct or a specialty. While Harvard, M.I.T., Columbia, and the University of California at Berkeley, are now trying to identify the planning specialist, a fundamental issue is not being solved. (It should be noted that at Berkeley, North Carolina, and others, the Planning Department is not in the architectural school.)

* * *

Any visitor to the TVA is astonished by the harmony of architecture and environmental planning, if he is aware of what he is seeing. The breadth of vision, the dynamic quality of the technical solutions to vast problems, and the beauty and sufficiency of the design are breathtaking and convincing. Why? What, besides the talent of architects, engineers, and physical planners, was involved?

First: there was a program. The program consisted of a series of objectives. These objectives were stated in terms of social, economic, and administrative philosophy.

Second: there were environmental and geographical factors which required objectives balanced with the first.

Third: there were the architectural and engineering plans to be designed to carry out the objectives of the first two points.

From the smallest house in the planned town of Norris to the greatest dam or power plant a unified creative effort placed a premium on consistent, orderly, and attractive development of land, water, and buildings for a fundamental social purpose. That's why the whole thing rings true.

from the column "Out of School" Progressive Architecture Magazine, April, 1950

Quetico-Superior

—from p. 2

Approximately two-thirds of the Quetico-Superior region lies north of the border, where the wild land is already in solid public ownership. However, public policies of management for the preservation of wilderness values are not as completely developed there as in the United States. Except for the establishment of the Quetico Provincial Park, of roughly one million acres, no reservations or zones have been established in final form, although tentative zoning plans have been developed by the land managing agencies. Even in Quetico Park administrative policies have not yet completely crystallized; for example, the ban against additional permits for resorts and other structures had not, as recently as a year ago, attained the status of a permanent policy. The degree to which roads will be permitted in the Park, if at all, will presumably require additional study by Canadian administrative authorities before policies are formulated. Fortunately, the character of the ownership plus the absence of some of the pressures that have long been present in the United States, permit Canadian administration a relatively free hand in zoning and other protective measures.

In spite of the advances that have been made over the years, the Quetico-Superior program, particularly that portion of it designed to preserve primitive values, is by no means free from danger. Control of aircraft use, with the prevention of hydroplane landings on the lakes within those areas most prized for wilderness values, is obviously a very necessary undertaking in both countries. A form of action to limit aircraft use on the United States side of the border is now being sought. Limits on the use of heavy motor boat and other similar forms of mechanized travel likewise should be invoked if that form of use expands so as to threaten the true wilderness portions of the areas. The mixed ownership of lands in the roadless areas creates another serious situation since one-tenth of the million acres in these areas is still privately-owned. These difficulties in safeguarding the wilderness portions of the Quetico-Superior region are typical of those with which the protection of all wilderness areas will be faced sooner or later. The inevitable tendency, unless zoning and related controls are instituted, will be toward serious impairment and even destruction of wilderness values.

Fortunately, the President of the United States, on December 17, 1949, issued an executive order which affords protection to specified Roadless Areas in the Superior National Forest, by prohibiting flight in aircraft below 4,000 feet except as required in:

- (a) Making an emergency landing.
- (b) Navigating when low-level flight is necessary for safety.
- (c) Conducting or assisting in the conduct of official business of the United States, the State of Minnesota, or of Cook, St. Louis, or Lake County, Minnesota.
- (d) Conducting rescue operations.